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ABSTRACT

Social studies education is irrelevant to most students and will not be improved by either of the two most frequently suggested solutions: teacher accountability and inservice programs. A better way of improving social studies programs is to reform teacher education. Problems currently facing teacher training include indifference on the part of schools and divisions of arts and sciences, artificially created dichotomies between knowledge-centered approaches and student-centered approaches, lack of continuity from elementary to secondary teacher training, absence of a philosophical dimension to most educational research, and a dearth of courses which teach prospective teachers to use new materials. Suggestions for the improvement of social studies teacher training include: schools of education should (1) coopepate with liberal arts colleges to relate social science knowledge to student experience; (2) encourage multidisciplinary social science courses; (3) organize laboratories for applying social science concepts to the K-12 curriculum; (4) serve as clearinghouses for curriculum innovations; (5) encourage research of a more philosophical nature; (6) train education majors to incorporate social realities (unemployment, boredom, migration, future uncertainties) into the curriculum; (7) offer specific inservice workshops designed to bridge the expanding gap between social studies knowledge and the classroom teacher; and (8) clearly define objectives in areas such as methods, knowledge, skills, future awareness, field experience, and testing, and create a system which reinforces these objectives. (Author/DB)

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SOCIAL STUDIES CONFERENCE

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"Breaking Down the Walls Between Teacher Training and the Rest of the World"

by

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SP 010 785

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am not giving this speech lightly. A lot of soul searching has preceded the writing of these notes.

The negative attitudes of parents, students, and the public at large toward the social studies compel the free and responsible citizens to speak up on behalf of social studies training, the foremost educational channel through which the process of socialization may be strengthened and by which the bridge between knowledge and youth and the society at large may be built.

Surveys show that many students cannot identify the positive contributions social studies make to their education. Community, teachers, and school administrators frequently hold the field of social studies in low repute either explicitly or implicitly. The lack of confidence of many state legislatures is expressed by their voting for required courses in private free enterprise or in Americanism vs. Communism. The back to basics is so popular that a parrot could be elected to the Board of Education who could say "reading, writing, counting! Reading, writing, counting! Reading, writing, counting!"

The President of the United States announced a few days ago that 4-5 million dollars will be appropriated to improve basic skills by the very same specialists who brought reading and writing into bankruptcy.

In Marin County, California, parents, students, and teachers were asked to rank 18 goals of education in order of importance. All three groups ranked "To read with understanding" first. But, "To understand and value the democratic process as both an idea and reality", teachers (!) ranked it thirteenth. And parents, who consider it their job to inculcate traditional values, ranked it fourteenth.

What does it mean: "To read with understanding"? Does it mean reading Hitler, Jefferson, Adam Smith, and Karl Marx with understanding, but without relating their ideas to our democratic values? Does this make sense? In an increasingly specialized society, can we afford an educational system that does not teach its students how to comprehend the world holistically? While the public, the politicians, and many educators are applauding such dreamless objectives, the world is changing at a very fast rate. Our ability to predict the future is declining, and our anxiety is growing.

The following are news items taken from the March 12th and 13th editions of The Chicago Tribune, The Chicago Sun, and The New York Times:

1. "Science news - "carbon copy of humans". Some call this new effort God-like; others see in it the hand of the devil. Long, a science fiction dream, the power to choose, to create genetic carbon copies of animals and perhaps man is upon us."

2. "Ogaden, over which the war between Ethiopia and Somalia is being waged is a barren territory. It's only river is infested with crocodiles, and it's land is inhabited by scorpions and man-eating hyenas. Nothing else is there. Only the Soviets found something worth exploiting and that was the ancient hatred between Somalies and Ethiopeans.

3. "Ethiopia wipes hands of one war. Second awaits in Eritrea. Three Eritrean separatist groups with a total of 26,000 guerilla soldiers control all of Eritrea's 45,000 square miles. It has been the Soviets and Cubans who in the past trained and supplied most of the guerillas who have been fighting to break Eritrea away from Ethiopia to form an independent socialist nation."

4. "We'll cut off the arm of evil: Begin warns the PLO as the death toll in raid reaches 37. U.S. aides are gloomy on talks with Begin."

5. "South Molucan terrorists hold 50 in Netherlands."

6. "An airplane is hijacked by "cancer victim".

7. "In Calcutta, 80% of all families live in one room."

8. "It will soon be a year since President Carter sent his "moral equivalent of war" energy program to Congress with the expectation that it would be enacted and in operation in six months. Passage is now neither a certainty nor in sight."

9. "If we are rich, how come our dollar is sinking? The dollar once was the Rock of Gibralter, the symbol of stability. We used to say "sound as a dollar". But the dollar's value in the world has been falling from time to time for nearly seven years."

10. "160,000 miners are defiant of work order."

11. "Farm strikers claim they will cut spring planting in half."

12. "Chicago in 1990 - a grim picture. This city has a lacepants in the front and a soiled drawers behind. Chicago could become like Northern Ireland's Belfast - an armed camp of city dwellers looking threateningly toward different suburbs. If minority groups continue to be denied full employment and equal access to our economy and society, it is naive to assume that Chicago's minorities will indefinitely accept their lot. Continuing frustration, alienation, despair, and hostility can readily translate into violence. History should have taught us there is nothing as dangerous as a nation, a group, or a person with nothing to lose."

"Other large U.S. cities are not much better than Chicago..."

13. "High price to pay for pesticides. We are not talking about the price of the bottle on the shelf. Instead, we are talking about the long term costs in lives and health associated with the continued production and use of pesticides whose risks too often outweight benefits. Chlorodane and heptachlor have been found to some degree in body tissues of 99% of the U.S. population.

When U.S. use of another pesticide, Phosvel, was banned because it causes irreversible nerve damage, the chemical was and is still being exported to other countries to "help" in insect control. In Egypt, it caused deaths and crippling convulsions. In the U.S. Southwest, it was found on tomatoes shipped to this country from Mexico. But the danger is not only in the boomerang effect. It is a problem of morality. According to the World Health Organization studies, half a million people worldwide suffer pesticide poisoning every year."

Ladies and gentlemen, every episode here is a spark to stimulate the intellect of youth. Every episode is a powerful motivation for learning. Every episode should be a challenge to social studies educators. But many of these educators do not respond to these signals despite the fact that these events threaten the foundation on which our social system rests.

Our economic system rests on the belief in ever-increasing undifferentiated economic growth, and upon the sovereignity of the consumer at a time of dwindling

resources and increasing deterioration of the environment. Our political system rests upon our ultimate faith in our democracy. We fought two world wars and in Korea and Vietnam to make the world safe for democracy. We believed that the world was yearning for democracy.

Thomas Jefferson believed that "trusted with the destinies of the solitary republic of the world, the only monument of human rights, and the sole depository of the sacred fire of freedom and self government, from hence is to be lighted up in every other region of the world."

Contrast Jefferson's faith in democracy with the final resolution of the Belgrade Conference on Human Rights in which the words "human rights" have been omitted: "This document may serve as a silent witness that democracy is not the prevailing system of the world nor is it the system for which the people of the world are yearning."

Our cultural system is based on our belief in material advancement challenged by depleting resources; in the power of reasoning challenged by our policy of maintaining peace through the balance of terror; in the blessings of science challenged by the threat of irreversible consequences; in the belief in pragmatism, the here and now solution, challenged by the dire need for long-term thinking.

The challenges are everywhere - in the families, in the neighborhoods, in the cities, in the regions, in the nations, and on our planet; but we ignore them.

The youth with a sense of idealism and critical social vision feel that somewhere there is a new world but we do not help them to get there. The

result is a "cut-flower civilization". One outcome of the cut-flower civilization was reported in the March 12th issue of The Chicago Tribune:

> "That Monday night was to be like so many others for Kevin Norman and Scott Graves, each 16 years old, juniors in a high school outside Neperville, near Chicago. Perpetual partying had come to dominate the nights of these youth. In 1978, the formula for a party was a little pot, a little beer, some pizza; then settle back for a two-pronged audio assault of television and stereo. That evening, one little extra would be added. About 9:00 p.m., Kevin called a friend and urged him, as the youth later recalled, "Hurry up and get over here! We've got some really great stuff to snort!" Then Kevin and Scott nestled on the floor and began to sniff from a small vial containing a clear, amber-colored liquid called halothane, a powerful anesthetic. It's effects were almost immediate. First, a loss of coordination, a resemblance of drunkeness. Soon after, a deep, peaceful sleep. And very quickly, total paralysis of the breathing apparatus. Then death. Bill Norman lavished gifts on his son Kevin, providing him with a motorcycle, a weightlifting setup, and a television video game. Bill Norman said of his son and his son's friends: "Their basic attitude was to really live and to always be out for a good time, just take things as they come. What bothered us was that he always seemed to be bored - all his friends were - they hung out together as if they chose to be bored collectively rather than individually."

A suburban teenager interviewed through a suburban drug counseling program agrees that boredom is a major factor in drug use among teenagers. "There never seemed to be anything to do but get high, and once you do that, you just want to get higher." One 18-year old girl from a western Chicago suburb estimates that 75% of her senior classmates have used drugs, most of them regularly.

This is the state of the Nation.

This is the state of social studies education: unresponsiveness to the rest of the world. Social studies classes may have current events sessions, but there is no depth to them.

Two popular solutions are offered, but both lead down blind alleys. One solution is teacher accountability which demands that teachers be held responsible for the achievement or lack of achievement of their students. But many practicing teachers rightly complain that teacher training did not provide the substance, skills, and strategies necessary for insuring student achievement to the degrees demanded by proponents of accountability. Also, the problem with accountability is that we still do not know exactly how a child learns. No one can decide whether environment, heredity, or both, and to what degree each, influences learning.

The second solution offered is in-service programs which are also blind alleys. The workshops and institutes which I have attended for many years have been the glorified comfort stations for the defective training of teachers.

It is my opinion that the only way to improve and widen the horizon vision of the social studies program and educators is through the thorough reform of teacher training, and dialogue has to start now!

What are some of the problems in teacher training?

The Schools or Divisions of Arts and Sciences are indifferent to teacher training. Principles courses dominate the landscape of the undergraduate program. These courses are unsuitable for teacher training. Most principles courses are conducted for large classes in an unfavorable climate for creative teaching. Also, most principles courses are intended for Arts and Sciences majors. Educational majors cannot possibly relate and select from the mass of material for classroom needs. Multidisciplinary training is not offered because

Arts and Sciences are broken up into autonomous, academic territories which are jealously guarded by the department heads. Survey courses are frequently shallow and improvised.

Schools of Education suffer from the miscarriage of academic freedom. In many Schools or Divisions of Education, the social studies requirements are prescribed in terms of credit hours and not in terms of content. The result is that many students follow the line of least resistance, and choose courses which will have little usefulness in their future classrooms.

Dichotomies have been harmfully created. Knowing and ways of knowing are split apart. Knowledge-centered approach and student-centered approach have been polarized. Value commitment is declared incompatible with freedom. (We seem to forget here that the people refused to ratify the Constitution until there was the insurance of the Bill of Rights which is based on the safeguards of life, liberty, justice, property, and general welfare.) Knowledge and the development of basic skills are divorced. Discipl[illegible] of social studies accurse the proponents of social science with wanting to [illegible] children into social scientists. Elementary and secondary education are separated by an iron curtain, with the result of a lack of continuity from elementary to secondary education.

Educational research has little value for practicing teachers. Most of the educational research deals with minute areas. It is highly quantitative and much of it lacks philosophical dimensions.

The teacher training is cut off from the rest of the world. Most of the curriculum innovations in the social studies in the 1960's have taken place outside the teacher-training institutions. The methods classes of the Schools

of Education could not cope with most of these projects. When the young teacher graduates entered the classrooms, they did not know how to use the new materials effectively, or how to modify them to meet the community needs of the students. In many cases, publishers who were biased toward sales conducted the in-service training programs.

It is my observation that nowhere else in the world can one find so much teacher creativity than in this country. Unfortunately, little of this creativity is disseminated because the teacher-training institutions do not serve as a clearing house for innovation.

It is a well-known fact that schools and communities must work harmoniously if the school system is interested in educational progress. One of the main reasons for the refusal of school bond issues is the lack of communication between school and the community. No one explains to the community the objectives of new programs because school administrators have not been trained to do so.

What are some of the solutions for the improvement of teacher training?

The Liberal Arts Colleges and the Schools of Education must work together to train social science educators to make new knowledge available for the public domain. As science advances, the gap widens between knowledge and the curriculum. The training of such a new profession is needed to close the gap. Social science educators should work either alone or with teams to relate frontier thinking to students' experience with increasing depth and complexity.

The Liberal Arts Colleges should design new multidisciplinary courses in which the basic concepts of the various social science disciplines are taught. There should be laboratories where the concepts can be applied to current social problems.

The Schools of Education should organize laboratories where the social science concepts taught in the Liberal Arts Colleges will be applied to the K-12 curricula.

The Schools of Education should become the clearing house of curriculum innovations developed by rank and file teachers, by social scientists, and by educators. They should develop teacher training strategies which demonstrate that content and method and knowledge and basic skills are indivisible.

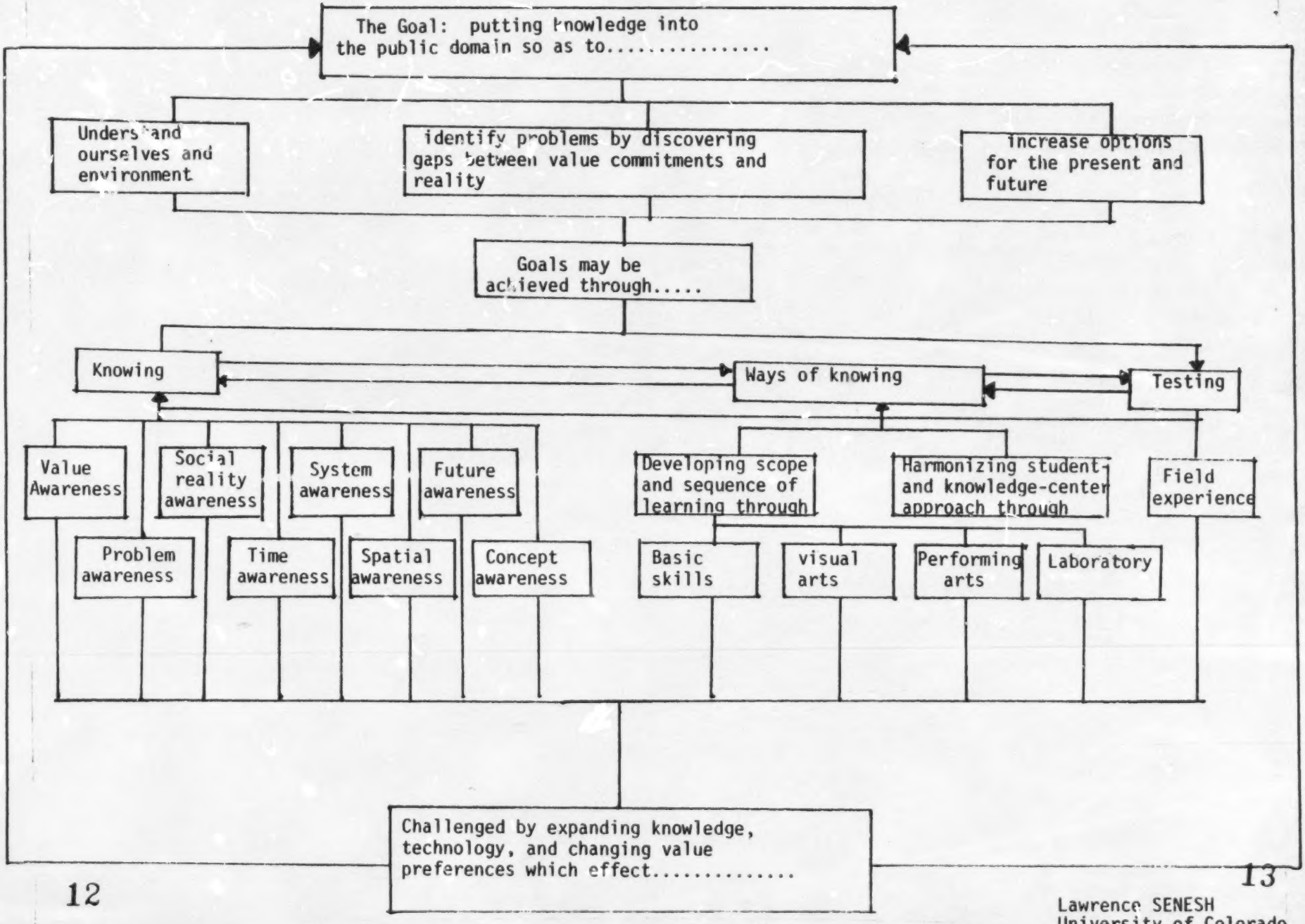
The Schools of Education should encourage research of more philosophical natures; for example, they should encourage Ph.D. theses on the relationship between value awareness and social attitudes, community awareness of youth and their future options, cultural and ethnic identity and dropouts.

The Schools of Education must be a window on the community and on the world. They must train the young educational majors how to incorporate the social realities into the curriculum, particularly those which have immediate concern for youth such as unemployment, boredom, youth migration, and the future.

The Schools of Education should become a bridge between expanding knowledge and the practicing teacher in the classroom. The in-service programs should not be used to correct the shortcomings of teacher training; rather, they should present the expanding knowledge in the disciplines and teaching strategies.

Finally, the teacher training programs must be organized into a system where the goals are clearly defined; where the components are interacting to achieve these goals; and where the goals are continuously challenged by expanding knowledge, technology, and changing values. The following chart summarizes teacher training as a system.

Teacher Training as a System



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Ladies and gentlemen, the fate of the future of the social studies program is in our hands. The faith of our youth in the future is also in our hands. All of us, teachers, administrators, college faculty from the sciences and education, community leaders, government officials, must all enter into a grand alliance to develop a new design for teacher training which will raise teachers to the level of the ethical code of the National Education Association:

> "The educator, believing in the worth and dignity of each human being, recognizes the supreme importance of the pursuit of truth, devotion to excellence, and the nurture of democratic principles. Essential to these goals is the protection of freedom to learn and to teach, and the guarantee of equal educational opportunity for all. The educator accepts the responsibility to adhere to the highest ethical standards."

So be it!